

## *The 25<sup>th</sup> Rijeka Days of Bioethics: From Bioethics to Biolaw in Mediterranean Cultures*

(Rijeka, 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023)

This year marked the jubilee 25th year of the Rijeka Days of Bioethics titled *From Bioethics to Biolaw in Mediterranean Cultures*. The conference took place on the 12th and 13th of May 2023 and consisted of three events. The first day included the symposium *Spremnost na različitost (Readiness for diversity)*, which covered a wide range of important topics related to the accessibility of health care to minority and vulnerable groups and the importance of lifelong learning about differences; and the series of lectures on law and historical development of bioethics entitled *Introductory remark to bioethical-legal discourse*. On the subsequent day, the formal ceremony for presenting the annual Fritz Jahr Award, and the project workshop for the international and interdisciplinary project *EuroBioMed*, took place.

The conference was organized by the Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities/UNESCO Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Rijeka, the *Fritz Jahr* Documentation and Research Centre for European Bioethics at the Faculty of Health Studies of the University of Rijeka, and the Scientific Centre of Excellence for Integrative Bioethics and the Croatian Bioethics Society at the Faculty of Law. The event was founded by the Faculty of Health Studies, Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Law of the University of Rijeka, the Croatian Science Foundation, the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, and Jadran-galenski laboratorij Ltd.

The conference was organized in a hybrid form, comprising both on-site and online lectures. People could also partake in the lectures via an online platform.

This year's Rijeka Days of Bioethics opened with an online presentation *Why and How Bioethics Can Touch the Future?* by Mara de Sousa Freitas, Ph.D., Director of the Institute of Bioethics at the Catholic University of Portugal, which served as a great introduction to the conference topics and an opportunity for attendees to learn more about the presenter's institution and research.

Following this online lecture, the conference moved to the Conference Hall of the Faculty of Medicine Rijeka where the president of the Organising Committee Robert Doričić, Ph.D., of the Faculty of Medicine Rijeka, gave a warm welcome to the presenters and attendees and emphasized the importance of recognizing differences and including them in the education of future health care workers so that everyone can have access to quality health care. Opening remarks for the symposium were given by Amir Muzur, Ph.D., Head of both the Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka and the *Fritz Jabr* Documentation and the Research Centre for European Bioethics, as well as Ivana Marić, Ph.D., the Vice Dean for Education at the Faculty of Medicine Rijeka.

The first lecture *Jehovah's Witnesses: Medical and Ethical Challenges* by Marko Đurović, of the Jehovah's Witness Hospital Liaison Committee in Croatia, gave us examples of both challenges and good practices regarding the care of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Croatian health care system. The lecture explained Patient Blood Management, emphasized the importance of communication between doctors and patients, and showed resources and contact information available to medical care professionals, which sparked meaningful discussions among the participants. Discussion about the importance of respecting patients' religious views continued in the lecture on *Religious and Spiritual Care in Slovenian Hospitals* in which Mojca Ramšak, Ph.D., University of Ljubljana, presented her research. The research concluded that patients in Slovenia have many resources available for different religious practices and that medical care professionals respect other religious practices, which is especially important for palliative patients and minority groups.

The next two lectures gave attendees the chance to hear about the experiences of experts working in non-profit organizations. First, Etem Fazli, from Youth Roma Association *Romska budućnost*, noted in his talk, *Roma and the Croatian Health Care System* that even though Roma are generally satisfied with the health care they receive in Croatia, there are still some challenges this minority group faces, such as language barriers, not being able to understand the medical terminology or given treatment instructions and not knowing how to build trust with health care providers. Roma from the rural areas are the most vulnerable group. The topic about the importance of understanding culture and language for receiving quality health care continued with the online lecture *Integrating People of Immigrant Origin in the Local Community*

by Petra Babić and Martina Buterin, from the non-profit organization Civis Mundis, who talked about their extensive experience working with people of immigrant origin. They noted that the key obstacles in receiving quality health care for migrants are the lack of organization and communication between different parts of the health care system and the availability of cultural and language translators, as well as the need for educating health care workers about different needs those patients have and how to address them.

Jasminka Jutertić's (Ph.D., University of Rijeka, University Counselling Centre, The Psychological Counseling Office) presentation titled *Guidelines for Improving Work with LGBTQ+ persons* shed light on the significance of educating and informing health care professionals about heterosexism and the proper way in which to engage with patients that shows respect for their sexual orientation and gender identity so that they feel included and safe.

The talk by Nina Pereza, Ph.D., Faculty of Medicine Rijeka, *Appreciating the diversity of each student: the importance of education for medical educators in achieving individualization of the teaching process*, summarized the workshops and laid out future plans for the program of lifelong education at the Faculty of Medicine Rijeka which aims to improve teacher competencies for individualized teaching and respecting one's differences.

The common thread in all the lectures in *Readiness for Diversity* was the significance placed on the communication between health care professionals and patients as well as the necessity for continuous education which includes perspectives and needs of different groups. The symposium was attended by experts from various disciplines alongside students from the Faculties of Medicine, Health Studies, Law, and Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Rijeka who eagerly participated in the discussions and agreed on the importance of including learning about the needs and problems of different minority groups and interacting with them during their education.

The second session of the first day, the *Introductory Remark to Bioethical-legal Discourse*, was opened with a welcome speech by the Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Rijeka, Vesna Crnić-Grotić, Ph.D. In the first lecture of this session titled *Bioethical Perspective on Assisted Reproductive Technology*, Ivana Kunda, Ph.D., Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka, compared the French and Croatian laws on assisted reproductive technology (ART) and noted the variations and similarities in the reproductive law despite different socio-political environments of two countries. Discussion on bioethics law continued with the lecture *From Legislative Revision to a Change of Course in Public Policy Law No. 2021-2017 of August 2, 2021, Relating to Bioethics* by Christian Byk, Ph.D., Secretary General, International Association

of Law, Ethics and Science and last year's winner of the annual international Fritz Jahr Award. Byk summarized the changes in French bioethics law and emphasized the normative role the state maintains regardless of the different ideological basis or changes in the law. This year's Fritz Jahr award winner Eleni Kalokairinou, Ph.D., from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in the lecture *Bioethics along the Centuries in Greece* showed the historical development of bioethics in Greece, and classified it into three periods: Classical, the Byzantine-Christian and the contemporary era, noting that while in the beginning bioethics were under strong influence of medicine, contemporary bioethics is being researched by many different disciplines.

The second day of the conference began at the Faculty of Health Studies with the formal award ceremony for the annual international Fritz Jahr Award for research and promotion of European bioethics. The ceremony was opened by a welcome speech from the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Rijeka, Goran Hauser, Ph.D. Last year's winner Christian Byk, Ph.D., received his reward in person and this year's award winner, Eleni Kalokairinou, Ph.D, was announced. Eleni Kalokairinou is the translator and author of a great number of books and articles and her research helped develop and promote integrative bioethics, especially its European tradition, and find the roots of those ideas in the Ancient Greek thought.

The program continued with a project workshop and a series of presentations regarding the activities and results of the *EuroBioMed: From Diversity of Traditions to a Common Euro-Mediterranean Bioethical Platform: Constructing a Tool for Dialogue and Action* project. The purpose of this project is to find similarities and differences between European Mediterranean countries through theoretical and empirical analysis and to establish a joint charter of bioethical standards. Marianna Gensabella, Ph.D., and Maria Laura Giacobello, Ph.D., University of Messina, outlined in their presentation *A Sketch for a History of Bioethics in Italy* the development and different influences of bioethics in Italy. Attendees had the opportunity to hear about the key insights from *The Split Workshop on Responsible Science*, presented by Iva Rinčić, Ph.D., Medical Faculty Rijeka, and *Study Trip to Spain: Barcelona, Madrid, Salamanca, Oviedo, Gijón, Bilbao* presented by Iva Rinčić and Amir Muzur, Ph.D., Faculty of Medicine Rijeka. Tijana Trako Poljak, Ph.D., from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, talked about the process of constructing and evaluating the questionnaire used in the project and the rest of the research group shared their experience while applying the questionnaire: Ivana Tutić Grokša (Faculty of Medicine Rijeka) in Croatia (Rijeka, Zagreb, Split), Toni Buterin, Ph.D., (Faculty of Medicine Rijeka) in Barcelona, Igor Eterović, Ph.D., (Faculty of Medicine Rijeka) in Thessaloniki and Robert Doričić, Ph.D., (Faculty of Medicine Rijeka) in Messina. The workshop was concluded with Josip Guć's Ph.D.,

(University of Split) presentation on *Attending conferences* and *Papers published* in the context of the project.

The celebratory 25<sup>th</sup> Rijeka Days of Bioethics brought together experts from a variety of different fields, research interests, and countries, as well as students from different faculties. The conference presented a great opportunity to hear about the historical development of bioethics and the country-specific varieties in the bioethical tradition together with the examples of bioethics in practice, like the changes of laws, as well as the importance of respecting and being mindful of different experiences and needs of others.

**Ana Depope**